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ABSTRACT

This paper contains descriptions of activities that have proven successful in one middle school's reading program. Each description contains a commentary on the activity, its objective, the skills it reinforces or teaches, and the materials needed. Among the activities presented are a method of teaching vowel sounds; a creative writing activity involving cartoon strips; a technique for teaching syllabication; a means of criteria reference testing on a low budget; a method to be used in finding a topic noun, topic idea, or topic sentence and in summarizing a paragraph; an exercise to help students prepare for standardized test taking; and methods for implementing and maintaining a sustained silent reading program. The paper also provides information about the school where the activities were developed and about its reading program, and a discussion of sustained silent reading. (FL)

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# these worked try them

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Middle School Reading Special Interest Group
St. Louis, Missouri
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THESE ACTIVITIES WORKED FOR US, WOULD YOU LIKE TO HEAR ABOUT THEM?

The following is a listing of activities which we at Armstrong MS have developed and used with more than normal success. We do not claim to be the originators of these activities and would like to thank those who do claim these as their original ideas. Our only claim concerning these activities is that they did and still do work for us. The listing usually will contain a commentary, an objective(s), the skills reinforced or taught and the materials used in the activity. Hopefully, you will be able to take at least one of the activites and adapt it to your situation. If you do, would you please send me a copy of what you have done so that I might share it with others and also try it in my teaching situation.

I. THE IMPOSSIBLE IS POSSIBLE---VOWEL SOUND INSTRUCTION IN THE MIDDLE SCHOOL.

A. Commentary: It would go without saying that every child who is a successful reader has mastered the sound code of the English language. Teaching middle school children this code is no easy task. The elementary teachers have tried their best and they have not succeeded. Can success happen in the middle school? Through the use of the materials listed below we have found greater success than we have previously experienced.

B. Objective
1. The students are to review and complete materials which will allow them to master the principles and applications of of vowel sounds to reading.

C. Skills taught and/or reinforced
1. visual discrimination and synthesis of vowels
2. auditory discrimination and synthesis of vowel sounds
3. vowel sound principles and application of the principles

D. Materials
1. IDEAL Vowel Tapes, IDEAL School Supply Company,
2. R&R, Modern Curriculum Press, p. 16 to 62
3. Phonics We Use, book D, Rand McNally, p. 27 to 43

II. CARTOON CAPIONS - A WELCOME BREAK!

There are times when a break is needed from the normal work routine. Such a break doesn't have to be a game. Let me suggest this the next time

you and the kids need a break. Cut out the comic strips from the Sunday or weekday newspapers. Have the students read through the strips until they find one that they would like write a caption for. Once the cartoon is selected, have the student darken in or out the original caption of the cartoon. Now have the student write his caption for the strip. Display the "new cartoons" around the room. You'll be surprised how many students will read the "new cartoons". It is also very interesting to see the creativity some students have locked-up in their minds.

## III. SYLLABICATION INSTRUCTION - IT CAN BE EASY (some of the time)

A. Commentary: Students who are unable to decode long words into syllables usually have comprehension problems as well. Syllabication is governed by only a few rules, 10 or so. How can students whth problems in reading be taught to remember and apply these rules to their reading. Listed below is a Unit of Work which has proved to be highly successful in having the students learn to apply the rules of syllabication to their reading.

B. Objective
   1. The student will learn to apply the rules of syllabication to his own reading tasks by working through the exercises prescribed in the unit. The unit will allow the student to progress at his own rate.

C. Skills taught and/or reinforced
   1. phonetic analysis
   2. structural analysis

D. Materials (in order of importance)
   1. Phonics Workbook, book C, Modern Curriculum Press, p. 54, 118-122, 134-138, 140-143.
   2. Working With Sounds, book D, Barnell Loft Inc., units 22-34.
   3. Phonics We Use, book D, Rand McNally, p. 91-101.
   4. Be a Better Reader, books A, B, C, I, II, III, Prentice-Hall.

## IV. CRITERIA REFERENCE TESTING ON A LOW, LOW BUDGET

Criteria Reference Testing (CRT) provides a detailed analysis of the students strengths and weaknesses. It is much more thorough than just having one overall score. The problem with most CRT's is their cost. With shrinking budgets the issue becomes CRT's vs materials.The following is offered to you as a way in which you can have a multi-grade level set of CRT's at a relatively low cost. You will also be buying reading materials at the same time. BUY SEVERAL COPIES OF THE BE A

BETTER READER, Prentice Hall, AND USE THE PRE AND POST TESTS GIVEN IN THE TEACHERS MANUAL. THEY ARE IN CRT FROM. Through prudent buying you could have enough CRT's for your entire class. If you and a neighbor planned it right, you could split the cost and the materials.

I have used the Be a Better Reader CRT's since their introduction in the 1978 revised edition of BBR. The correlation between the results on them and standardized tests has been highly reliable. I use them as a check to determine when I should dismiss a student from remedial reading.

B. Materials
1. Be a Better Reader, books A, B, C, D, E, F, Prentice Hall.

V. IDEA---IDENTIFY--DEFINE--EXPAND--ARTICULATE

A. Commentary: Did you ever wish that someone would give you the answer to a difficult problem. This was the case several years ago for me. The answer wasn't given to me directly, but it was given to me in a sample book which I had received from my Prentice Hall Representative. The book, IDEA Power for Reading Comprehension, was set up in such a way that it enable me to offer my students a format for finding the topic noun, the topic idea and the topic sentence. As a bonus, the students are required to show their writing ability by summarizing the topic noun, topic idea, topic sentence and details into one sentence. I use the material as a teacher directed activity. We do almost all of level A (8 exercises) together. Depending on the level of the student we may continue through level B or we may branch off to a similar material by another author.

B. Objective
1. In order to provide the students with an organized method of finding the topic noun, the topic idea, the topic sentence and also to provide the students with writing practice in summarizing a paragraph, the students will complete, review and discuss exercises from level A and B of the book IDEA Power for Reading Comprehension.

C. Materials
1. IDEA Power for Reading Comprehension, Prentice Hall
2. Getting the Main Idea, Barnell Loft
3. Stranger Than Fiction, Globe Book Co.

D. Skills taught and/or reinforced
1. literal comprehension
2. notetaking
3. summarizing

## VI. TEST TAKING PRACTICE

A. Commentary: Do students do poorly on standardized tests because they are not familar with the type and format of the test questions? After reviewing teacher designed and standardized tests, I decided that the types and format of the questions on the standardized tests probably played a large part in having some students do poorly on the test. Coming up with my conclusion was easy. Finding materials to work with the students was not so easy. I did find two materials and two magazine articles which were a big help with the problem.

B. Objective
   1. In order to allow students to do practice exercises in preparation for standardized testing; the students will complete and review the testing practice materials in small groups.

C. Skills taught and/or reinforced
   1. test taking
   2. vocabulary
   3. following directions
   4. comprehension
   5. phonetic analysis
   6. structural analysis
   7. graphic analysis

D. Materials
   1. "How to Do Well on Tests Without Cheating", Scholastic Scope Magazine, October 4 and 25, 1980.
   2. Improving Test Scores, Scope Visuals, Scholastic.
   3. Scoring High in Reading, books C and D, Random House.

## VII. IMPLEMENTING AND MAINTAINING A SILENT SUSTAINED READING PROGRAM

(PAUL SONERSON)

A twenty to thirty minute period can be set aside each school day to stimulate a reading habit in each of our students. By allowing these young people a daily opportunity for reading what interests them, we as educators can help improve, through practice, a skill vital to every individual's success.

This program can and should involve everyone in the entire school. It can provide an opportunity to increase involvement in the school library. Parents and community organizations can help serve this program if you so wish. A sustained reading program can help pull everyone together for a single needed effort.

The price of a program of this nature can be $0.00 when coupled with a clear explanation by its implementors and consistent cooperation by those involved.

DEFINITION: A sustained silent reading period is time set aside from each school day for every individual to read something of his or her interest.

## SILENT SUSTAINED READING PROGRAM

I. Twenty to thirty minutes for sustained reading should be blocked into your school's schedule.
   A. This time slot should take place everyday at the same time to establish a habitual routine.
      1. Changing the time of day when sustained reading takes place will confuse people.
      2. People will more readily remember to bring their reading materials if they can expect this period at the same time everyday.
   B. A reading environment with plenty of reading materials (supplementary) should be available.
      1. A school wide book and magazine drive can take place through your student council and can be supported by the local parents group. Classroms can exchange these materials monthly or as needed.
      2. One class can report to the library during sustained reading. In addition, all Language Arts classes should make frequent visits to the library to select materials for sustained reading.

II. The major success of this programhinges on clearly explained ground rules which are closely followed once the program is in operation.
   A. Everyone, everyone in the class should be reading, including the adults.
      1. The model set for students is most important. We learn through example and as adults we must set this example..
      2. If a particular student will not read, make sure that this individual will not disturb others. Even sitting quietly and thinking for twenty minutes can be beneficial.
   B. Total school cooperation is needed to avoid distractions.
      1. There should be no movement in the school except for emergencies. Here is where you will need cooperation from administrators, counselors, office people and custodians.
      2. Teachers should discourage restroom visits except for emergencies.

III. This program must be maintained if its success is to be continued and recognized.
   A. Periodically at faculty meetings, the staff should be asked about any and all problems which are being encountered.
      1. This provides an opportunity to present solutions for these problems through the suggestions of your staff.
      2. School administrators should be aware of trouble areas so they can help solve the problems.
   B. Should this time be made flexible for use by other activities?
      1. If a special program runs into the sustained reading period, this occasional postponement should not be harmful.
      2. Teachers should not use this period as extra class time. Those who abuse valuable reading time in this manner will destroy the consistency of the program.

## VIII. KWHY RADIO STATION---BETHEL PARK, PENNSYLVANIA

A. Commentary: It is hard to find an activity which the students can work on which encompasses a large variety of reading and study skills. Through the play of my nine year old daughter and her friends, such an activity was created. The activity is that of having the students set up and run an imaginary radio station. The students have to file an application for a radio license, listen to the radio for a format and DJ style, use the library to locate records and do research for news programs, keep a log of their air time, use A-V equipment, interview fellow students, etc.

A word of caution is in order; be prepared with everything that you will need for the unit before you even discuss it with the students. They'll want to start the station the very minute you announce it.

Perhaps a fieldtrip to a local radio station could be arranged. Second best would be to have a DJ come to the school and talk to the students. Who knows--it may even spark an interest in the field as a career.

B. Objectives
   1. In order to involve as many reading and study skills in a unit as possible, for the purpose of evaluating and working with areas of weakness, the students will work on a unit whereby they will set up and operate a radio station.

C. Skills Taught and/or Reinforced
   1. listening
   2. following directions
   3. newspaper reading
   4. library skills
   5. writing skills
   6. summarizing skills
   7. interviewing
   8. note-taking
   9. outlining
   10. sequencing
   11.

D. Materials
   1. FCC or teacher-made application blanks
   2. records
   3. newspapers
   4. cassette recorders and blank tapes
   5. phonographs
   6. composition books
   7. reference materials
   8.

IX. REWARDS! POINTS--GUM--CANDY--HAPPYGRAMS--CERTIFICATES

A. Commentary: In a remedial classroom, rewards of any sort are extremely important to the students. The idea of getting a reward is sometimes more important that the reward itself. I give out points for the students daily performance. For every 20 points, the student is allowed to have a free class period . Take a bit time to develop your own system; it will be time well spent!

X. TYPEWRITERS IN THE READING LAB ???

A. Commentary: Wouldn't it be wonderful if all of your students wrote in beautiful cursive handwriting. Unfortunately, remedial reading are sometimes remedial cursive handwriting students as well. The students sometimes can't even read what they themselves have written. Because of this problem and because of a personal desire on my part to have the students be able to neatly express their ideas for everyone to read, I attempted to locate typewriters that weren't being used to their potential. It was through this effort that I was able to secure four brand new 1976 manual typewriters ! I was aided in my attempt by the MS Curriculum Coordinator, the Senior High School Business Coordinator and the school districts business manager.

The remedial students are given a basic 20 lesson course in the fundamentals of typing (Fry). The students receive about 20-25 minutes of typing instruction per class period. After about the first four or so lessons, the students are permitted to proceed at their own rates.

The typing skills learned by the students enable enable them to type out many of their reading assignments: cartoon captions, summary paragraphs, etc..

X. Typewriters (continued)

The typewriters and the typing course have been motivators as well as a means of allowing students to legibly express their thoughts. Now the poor handwriters can have others read their ideas. Ideas which were previously lost because they were illegible.

Having the typewriters in the Reading Lab has been well worth the time and effort that was put forth in getting them. It is rewarding to me when I see those once lost ideas coming out in a legible form.

B. Materials

1. Typing Course for Children, Edward Fry, Drier Educational Systems, Highland Park, NJ 08904
2. Typewriters

--THINGS TO THINK ABOUT--

According to the laws of aerodynamics, a bee isn't supposed to fly. He does fly however, because someone forgot to tell him that he can't fly.

Ants don't move very fast or carry large objects; but, given enough time they can move mountains.

Hopefully the teachers of transescent students will take a lesson from the bee and the ant. DO THE IMPOSSIBLE, TEACH THOSE KIDS TO READ TO THE UTMOST OF THEIR ABILITIES.

Neil Armstrong Middle School
5800 Murray Avenue
Bethel Park, Pennsylvania 15102

Principal-James C. Emler
Assistant Principal-James Willison
Reading Specialist-Gerald J. Kochinski

I. Background Information about the School

A. Student enrollment-700+
B. Faculty-50+
C. Departmentalized
D. Heterogenious grouping in all acedemic areas except math
E. Team planning and/or team teaching in all areas of the curriculum
F. Six class periods per day-51 minutes in length
G. Silent Sustained Reading is conducted daily from 1:30 to 1:50

II. Background Information about the Reading Program

A. Goals
   1. Each student is given the opportunity to review and practice comprehension, study skills, vocabulary, and eye efficiency skills at his level of achievement.
   2. Each student is encouraged to develop a recreational reading habit through the use of daily silent sustained reading.
   3. Each student who needs additional help with his reading skills is provided with positive learning experiences in which they will achieve sucess at their level of ability (Special Reading).

B. Areas of Instruction
   1. Comprehension and Study Skills
   2. Vocabulary and Study Skills
   3. Eye Efficiency Training
   4. Special Reading

C. Reading Personnel involved in the Basic Reading Program
   1. sixth grade - 2 1/2 Language Arts Teachers
   2. seventh grade - 2 1/2 Language Arts Teachers
   3. eighth grade - 2 1/2 Language Arts Teachers

D. Reading Personnel involved in the Special Reading Program
   1. one full time Certified Reading Specialist
   2. one part-time Language Arts Teacher who is a Certified Reading Specialist (one period per day)
   3. one part-time Language Arts Teacher (one period per day).

E. Reading classes per twelve weeks
   1. sixth grade - twelve times in a block schedule
   2. seventh grade - twelve times - once weekly
   3. eighth grade - twelve times - once weekly
   4. Special Reading Students meet twice a week unless they are in band or chorus, in which case they meet once per week.

F. Materials
   1. Material selection and use is determined by the objective of the lesson and the ability of the student.

III. Operation of the Program

A. Basic Reading Program

1. student assignment
   a. heterogeneous grouping
   b. homogeneous grouping within the classroom for instructional purposes
   c. students rotate between teachers throughout the year so that each child completes work in each of the skill areas

(see chart on page C8)

2. work assignments
   a. materials from various sorces are assigned to the student so that he may accomplish a stated objective
   b. material assignments are based upon the students ability as determined through standardized tests, teacher recommendations, and teacher observations

3. management system
   a. teacher designed check sheets based upon the skills taught at the grade level are used to manage the students progress
   b. completed work sheets are kept and passed on to next years teachers
   c. teachers and students cooperatively keep the record sheets up to date

B. Silent Sustained Reading

1. 1:30 to 1:50 P.M. daily
2. the reading of whatever interests the students is encouraged
3. various types of materials are available in the classrooms for the students, or they may bring Library books or materials from home

C. Special Reading Program

1. areas of work
   a. perception skills
   b. auditory and phonetic skills
   c. word analysis skills
   d. word recognition skills
   e. comprehensions skills
   f. vocabulary skills
   g. eye efficiency training
   h. study skills

2. placement in the program
   a. one year below grade level as determined by
      (1) SRA Achievement Test
      (2) Stanford Reading Achievement Test
      (3) Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test
      (4) Informal Reading Inventories
   b. teacher recommendations
   c. parent recommendations

3. classes per week and class size

a. two periods per week for regular students
b. one period per week for chorus or band students
c. classes range from two to eight students

4. management and evaluation
   a. student recortd sheet
      (1) test scores listed
      (2) strengths and weaknesses listed
      (3) assignments listed
      (4) performance listed
      (5) teacher and student maintained
   b. on-going evaluation of students is done through the use of formal and informal testing

5. teaching methods employed
   a. eclectic
   b. student conferencing in order to develop student awareness and self-correction of student problems is used
   c. development of positive self-concept is the underlying goal of all instruction

6. scheduling
   a. mastered scheduled as a regular subject
   b. Special Reading class time would normally be a study hall

7. testing
   a. Stanford Achievement Reading Test
   b. Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test
   c. SRA Achievement Tests
   d. Be A Better Reader (1978)
   e. Sucher-Allred Reading Test
   f. Junior High School Reading Achievement Test
   g. Roswell-Chall Reading Test
   h. Informal Reading Inventories

D. *Literature Reading

1. areas of work
   a. poetry
   b. novel
   c. short story
   d. mythology

*2. taught as part of the Language Arts Curriculum

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Student Assignment Chart

| | 60 days | 120 days | 180 days |
|---|---|---|---|
| Group A | comprehension study skills | eye efficiency training | vocabulary-study skills |
| Group B | vocabulary-study skills | comprehension study skills | eye efficiency training |
| Group C | eye efficiency training | vocabulary-study skills | comprehension-study skills |

To: Neil Armstrong Middle School Faculty
From: G. J. Kochinski
Date: January 8, 1980
Topic: Silent Sustained Reading (SSR)

New Year's Day brings about resolutions which we hope to keep. As we begin this year of 1980, I hope that you will read, integrate and apply the following thoughts to your Silent Sustained Reading Program.

The reasons we have SSR at NAMS is to provide:

1. an undistrubed time out from academic subjects in which all the students can read materials of their chosing
2. the students with adult models of reading behavior
3. a time for students to discover new interests
4. a time for students to develop the life-long habit of reading for pleasure

The development and implementation of a SSR program is not difficult if we can keep in mind that the prime objective is to have the students enjoy and profit from a SSR period. The key to success in anything is the people involved. You, as a professional educator, are what makes SSR work. With this in mind, I have listed several suggestions below that can help you make SSR an enjoyable time for you and your students. I am counting on you to use your good judgement and your best efforts to make SSR work effectively.

1. Be a reading model! Read yourself. At the end of SSR, tell some students what you're reading. Correcting tests and other non-reading matters can wait.
2. Encourage all students to read by using your most pleasant persuasive method. Discourage students from doing homework. In either case, use your professional judgement in each individual situation under your control.
3. Encourage students to bring reading materials from their homes or from the school library with them to your class. (May I suggest giving a bonus point or two to those students who bring materials to class.)
4. Have reading materials in the room for those who forget their's.
5. Discourage movement about the room and in the halls. Stop class a minute or so before SSR and have the students get their materials for the entire period.
6. If a student will not read, make sure that this individual will not disturb others. Even sitting quietly and thinking for twenty minutes can be beneficial.
7. Schedule a short class visit to the library once every few weeks. Mrs. Pollner is more than willing to help students select their reading materials.
8. SSR is not an extension of regular class time. Don't use it as such. As a professional educator, use this time for the purpose for which it was meant.

You, through your attitudes and actions, can and do transmit more influence to the students than I or anyone else can through a PA announcement about SSR. Spend a few minutes during the next several days to remind your students of why we have SSR and what is expected from them.

Your cooperation in promoting and implementing SSR has been greatly appreciated in the past and your renewed and continuing support will be equally appreciated.

P.S. Problems? See me! I don't have all the answers, but between us and the others we can find the answers.